CHAP. II.

THE PREVAILING OPINION OF A SEXUAL CHARACTER DISCUSSED.

To account for, and excuſe the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two ſexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to ſpeak explicitly, women are not allowed to have ſufficient ſtrength of mind to acquire what really deſerves the name of virtue. Yet it ſhould ſeem, allowing them to have ſouls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead *mankind* to either virtue or happineſs.

If then women are not a ſwarm of ephemeron triflers, why ſhould they be kept in ignorance under the ſpecious name of innocence? Men complain, and with reaſon, of the follies and caprices of our ſex, when they do not keenly ſatirize our headſtrong paſſions and groveling vices.

—Behold,

—Behold, I ſhould anſwer, the natural effect of ignorance! The mind will ever be unſtable that has only prejudices to reſt on, and the current will run with deſtructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force. Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakneſs, juſtly termed cunning, ſoftneſs of temper, *outward* obedience, and a ſcrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and ſhould they be beautiful, every thing elſe is needleſs, for, at leaſt, twenty years of their lives.

Thus Milton deſcribes our firſt frail mother; though when he tells us that women are formed for ſoftneſs and ſweet attractive grace, I cannot comprehend his meaning, unleſs, in the true Mahometan ſtrain, he meant to deprive us of ſouls, and inſinuate that we were beings only deſigned by ſweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the ſenſes of man when he can no longer ſoar on the wing of contemplation.

How groſsly do they inſult us who thus adviſe us only to render ourſelves gentle, domeſtic